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Improving Air Quality in the Washington Metropolitan Region

Fairfax County's Commitment to Air Quality Excellence –

“Conceptual Recommendations”

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Air Quality Subcommittee (AQS) of the Fairfax County Environmental Coordinating Committee (ECC) was formed to recommend to the ECC potential County actions to improve air quality through the development of a Countywide Air Quality Management Plan. The objectives of the AQS in the development of this Plan include:

- The development of a Public Education Plan to include an Ozone Action Day Notification Process;
- A review of air quality-related codes and regulations, goals, objectives and policies to determine whether and what modifications might be appropriate; and
- A review of air quality-related strategies and practices to determine whether modifications would be appropriate.

In July 2003, the AQS set up four working groups that examined education and notification activities, planning documents, codes and regulations, and current practices and measures related to air quality. In November 2003, the AQS released a 'findings' document that described the work of the subcommittee. A revised version was later released in January 2003 (please see 1/26/04 Board Environmental Committee package for 'findings' document).

This document was developed based on the information presented in the findings document. The recommendations shown below have been separated into four thematic areas. To the extent possible, each area presents recommendations of what Fairfax County could do, and what could be done on a regional basis to improve air quality. With the exception of the sections addressing planning documents and codes, each part also distinguishes, to the extent possible, activities solely related to Ozone Action (Code Red) Days from ongoing activities in effect on all days regardless of the air quality status. This document is intended to present conceptual recommendations. Final recommendations with specific implementation plans will be developed later in the process of developing the Air Quality Management Plan, and will be included in a separate document.

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Education & Notification Recommendations

Internal

- Place an article in the “Courier” employee newsletter at the beginning of the ozone season with key messages for employees to be aware of.
- Ozone Brochure— Electronically distribute the Clean Air Partners brochure to directors and encourage them to discuss Air Quality issues with their staff as they pertain to their department. Include information about ridesharing, teleworking and transit services in the e-mail. Send the brochure along with the County Executive’s annual memo regarding the county’s air quality best practices.
- Work with the telework coordinator to find ways to expand promotion of telework. Use information on the specific numbers/percentages of teleworkers in each agency to encourage supervisors to promote behaviors like telework on Code Red Days in order to drive up participation.
- Include air quality informational fliers in payroll mailings. Print the fliers front and back with seasonal measures individuals can take to reduce air pollution.

External

- Place ads inside Fairfax Connector buses promoting ozone awareness.
- Place ads in Metro stations to promote the free bus rides on all Northern Virginia bus routes on Code Red Days.
- Contact local malls and see if they would allow brochures to be at their information areas, especially at the beginning of the ozone season.
- Contact Metro for permission to place brochures in Metro stations at brochure racks.
- Place brochures at information centers in grocery stores.
- Provide brochures at information counters in each library, in all government centers, park centers, board member’s offices, Health Department clinic sites, and school systems.
- Send an informational flyer to each county agency to post prominently where the public can view it.
- Send Clean Air Partners brochures home as backpack stuffers with school children.
- Send News to Use subscribers an article about ozone awareness that could be used by HOA’s in their newsletters and/or on their Web sites. In the article provide an address and phone number for requests for additional information.
- Find ways to incorporate information about air quality efforts into the school science curriculum. The revised Science SOL associated with air pollution is given in sixth grade, under Resources: 6.9, “The student will investigate and understand possible policy decisions relating to the environment.” Key concepts

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include management of renewable resources (water, air, soil, plant life, animal life.)

- Place ozone information on the Park Authority snow line as well, if there is adequate unused space.
- Promote the online trip planner on the Metro Web site, www.wmata.com. It is called "The Ride Guide."
- Expand on the county's current Web pages related to air quality. It should include information about what actions the county is taking to reduce ozone levels and it should raise awareness about the issue and what businesses and residents can do. Web pages should include: Parks/ Air Quality/ Health/ Environment and links to relevant Web sites such as EPA.
- Put all of the Clean Air Partners brochures onto the Health Department Web site for people to view or download. Promote this Web address on printed materials.
- Go through the various county chambers of commerce to notify major employers. Send an e-mail piece to the chamber and ask them to distribute to their e-mail list.
- Send a packet of information to all businesses in Fairfax County to tell them about Clean Air Partners and actions they can take on Code Red Days. In the future, this packet of information could be given out to new businesses when they get a business license or at some other point in their process of starting a business in the county.
- Identify which businesses are involved with Clean Air Partners. The county can use them as examples in promoting the program. Also they could be eliminated from mailings.
- Contact environmental groups such as Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District and the Green Breakfast Group to ask them to include items about ozone awareness in their print and/or e-newsletters.
- Place programming on cable Channel 16 to educate county residents about the issues associated with ozone in the environment. Perhaps work with Clean Air Partners to determine if they have any videos that could be used on Channel 16.
- Have the Park Authority staff contact Friends of the Parks groups to see if they can help with promotion of ozone awareness.
- Use volunteers to spread the message of good environmental stewardship. Some examples of these volunteers include members of EQAC, District Councils, and the Transportation Advisory Commission.
- Approach community groups and associations such as the Fairfax Federation to enlist them to place information on their Web sites.
- Work with the scouts to find ways that Environmental Merit Badges could be tied into ozone-related efforts.

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- Get the media to include ozone information and Code Red alerts in area weather reports and forecasts, thereby reaching a regional audience.

Ozone Action Days — Episodic Actions

- Put a message on bus marquees for forecasted Code Red days stating “Tomorrow is a Code Red Day. Free Bus Rides.”
- Check within the county to determine if mobile sign boards that comply with Zoning ordinance § 12-104(6) are available to use to notify people of Code Red days.
- Place Clean Air Partners signs and posters that say “Tomorrow is an Ozone Action Day” in the lobbies of government centers and other point of contact sites to notify staff and residents of how to modify their behaviors on these days.

Comprehensive Plan Recommendations

1. Update the introductory text under the "Air Quality" section of the Environment chapter of the Policy Plan. Include a discussion regarding the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC)/Council of Governments (COG) regional air quality planning process, transport issues, and regulatory changes and their implications to Fairfax County.
2. Add a policy to the Air Quality section to support the development of the Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) for Fairfax County and to recognize the Air Quality Management Plan as a mechanism to implement other air quality-related policies. Within the policy, identify the broad areas of focus of the Plan (public education, outreach, and notification; policy; codes and regulations; and measures and practices).
3. Add a policy that will reference other Policy Plan objectives and policies that have a relationship to air quality (e.g., concentration of growth in mixed use, transit-oriented centers; nonmotorized transportation; telework; Transportation Demand Management (TDM); transit facilities; ridesharing/carpooling; etc.) and that will identify/encourage air quality-beneficial actions that can be applied by developers (e.g., encourage the provision of/access to transit facilities; encourage TDM efforts (including ridesharing and telework programs); encourage episodic measures [e.g., no mow] that can be pursued on Code Red days). This will provide a foundation that can be used in negotiations for proffers for air quality-sensitive measures.
4. Upon completion of the Air Quality Management Plan, determine if further changes to the Policy Plan would be appropriate (to support AQMP recommendations) and add these changes to the ideas presented above.

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Codes & Regulations Recommendations

1. Amend Chapter 103 of the Fairfax County Code, the Air Pollution Control Ordinance, to remove obsolete text and update remaining sections.
2. Amend Chapter 103 of the Fairfax County Code with appropriate changes to support the Air Quality Management Plan (AQMP) once it is completed.

Under Virginia law, in addition to the public hearing and notice requirements generally applicable to ordinance amendments, any amendment to Chapter 103 will require the approval of the Virginia State Air Pollution Control Board (SAPCB). In approving the amendments, the SAPCB will consider, among other criteria, whether the provisions of the local ordinance are at least as strict as state regulations and whether adequate local resources will be committed to enforcing the proposed ordinance. Therefore, even though Chapter 103 is outdated, the Codes & regulations work group recommends waiting until the AQMP is completed before proceeding with the amendments to Chapter 103 and the requisite SAPCB approval.

Measures & Practices Recommendations

Fairfax County:

- Increase from \$60 to \$100 a month mass transit (Metrocheks) subsidy for government center County employees.
- Expand the transit subsidy to all County employees.
- Explore mechanisms to create more incentives to encourage those who work in Fairfax County to rent or purchase their primary residence in Fairfax County.
- Continue to support the County's hybrid vehicle replacement program.
- Consider relieving personal property taxes for hybrid or alternative fueled vehicles.
- Consider purchasing wind energy/solar power during the ozone season (May - September).
- Expand the County's gas can replacement program to private industry and County residents.
- Continue the County's lawn and garden equipment replacement program and consider expanding the program to private industry and residents (2-stroke to 4-stroke engines).
- Continue to track development of alternative fuels e.g., biodiesel/ethanol and recommend implementation as appropriate.
- Continue to explore fuel additives to reduce emissions and recommend implementation as appropriate.

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- Provide incentives (such as free or reduced space rentals) for vendors at the Fairfax County Fair who promote air-quality beneficial equipment (such as four-stroke lawn and garden equipment).
- Challenge Fairfax County Public Schools to reduce students' use of cars on Code Red Days.
- Explore the feasibility of funding additional transit service such as cross County service.
- Explore enhanced idling enforcement during the ozone season (May – September).
- Continue to support County's telework program to meet regional 20% goal.
- Continue the County rideshare program (public and private sectors), and consider expanding County and private outreach programs for ridesharing.
- Continue to recommend a reduction in County mowing operations by supporting the concept of natural meadows and no-mow areas.
- Continue to implement Tree Preservation Task Force recommendations. Trees help to reduce smog by providing canopy to cool the ground and reduce the formation of ground-level ozone.
- Reevaluate and expand the County's energy conservation manual/practices.
- Evaluate the County taking control of commercial trash pick-up operations. County control would serve to minimize redundant routes among competitors and allow the County to specify the use of cleaner burning equipment (trucks) used in County contracts.
- Investigate the use of catalyzed surfaces for commercial building air conditioning condensers. A catalyst can be applied to the cooling surfaces that removes ozone from air passing over them. Large a/c systems might have sufficient airflow to affect the general ozone concentration.
- Apply green building design/construction (light roofs) and light colored pavement. These are surface cooling measures that would reduce the formation of ozone.
- Consider providing free public transit on Code Orange and Red Days during the ozone season. Expanding free rides beyond Code Red Days would increase the reduction in emissions. It would also give commuters incentive to learn how to use mass transit instead of expecting them to adapt only a few days per year.
- Continue to promote computerized car pool matching.
- Encourage and assist department directors in exploring additional plans for compressed work weeks, flex-time schedules and staggered work hours to reduce commuting and shift it to less congested times of the day.

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Measures & Practices Recommendations - Ozone Action Days

Fairfax County:

- Explore developing a legislative proposal to restrict the use of gasoline powered lawn and garden equipment on Code Red Days.
- Provide on-site lunch incentives on Code Red Days (free soft drinks, discounted menu items, promotion coupon with purchase, etc.). Promote similar programs by private sector employers.

Measures & Practices Recommendations

Regional Application:

- Support Congressman Jim Moran's Bill once it has been introduced. The Bill seeks to eliminate the trading provision of the Clean Air Act for major point sources located in nonattainment areas.
- Evaluate the benefit of subsidizing wind/solar energy purchases for upwind jurisdictions. The major portion of ozone and precursors comes to the region from electric power plants in areas to the west and south.
- Consider providing incentives to upgrade the Mirant plants. These local electric power plants are major point sources.
- Recommend tighter emissions requirements for large point source generators.
- Consider implementation of environmental performance contracting (development of contract language for state and local governments in the region that would require vendors to meet performance standards for diesel equipment such as the installation of pollution control equipment, conversion of diesel engines to natural gas engines or other alternative fuels or the use of cleaner diesel fuel).
- Provide electrification at truck rest stops to reduce idling.
- Improve efficiency of weigh station operations to reduce idling.
- Explore benefit of remote airline check-in.
- Promote rail to Dulles.
- Evaluate the ability to seek legislative exemption from FLSA to allow state and local governments to implement the federal 9x9 program compressed work week.
- Encourage state tax relief for purchase and use of alternative fueled vehicles.
- Explore the legal authority and implications of imposing commuter emission reduction requirements on large employers. In Southern California, the South

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Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) rule (Rule 2202) requires employers to show achievement of emission reduction targets (ERTs) by reducing emissions from employee commutes. The rule outlines several means by which an employer can satisfy the ERT, and employers can use whichever one(s) they want, or make up new one(s) if they can show they meet the reduction criteria. As a last resort, they can contribute to an Air Quality Investment Program -- basically they pay a fee to the SCAQMD, which then uses the funds to pay for an approved air quality program that gains at least the same benefit as would have been accomplished had the employer achieved the ERT.

- Explore the concept of a Transportation Management Association (TMA). This approach is used in Southern California. A TMA is a proactive, non-profit, public benefit organization. A TMA is established for the purpose of helping employers, developers, building owners, government agencies and others collectively to establish policies, programs and services to address local transportation problems. A TMA can be the condition of approval for business licenses, building permits, zoning applications, etc., to minimize the air quality effects of new enterprise.
- Encourage the implementation of special event congestion reduction measures. Provide, or require the event to provide, means to reduce congestion at sporting, entertainment, or other such major events. Remote parking with shuttle service would be an example. Limiting direct auto access (thereby encouraging or requiring use of public transportation) would be another.